

Be Healthy – Grow What You Eat!

EXTENSION'S *Successful* Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Helping
Carolinians
Increase Their
Knowledge of
Gardening,
Manage Their
Landscape
Investment &
Protect the
Environment

Vegetables and fruits that you grow in your home garden often are superior in quality, freshness and taste than those in the grocery store. Just-picked freshness and the satisfaction of growing your own produce may renew the desire in both you and your children to eat more vegetables and fruits. Adding more fruits and vegetables shouldn't be difficult. They can be eaten raw or cooked, with a meal or as a snack, and they are part of a healthy diet, which has big pay-offs. Conversely, an unhealthy diet is one of the causes of rising health problems and medical costs.

Obesity is now the greatest health hazard in the United States. According to the latest data from the International Food Information Council, 25 percent of America's children are obese or at risk of becoming obese. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Nutrition Mapping Project reports that nearly half of North Carolina individuals are overweight. While the USDA recommends that all Americans eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day for good health, less than half of North Carolinians meet the daily vegetable recommendations and even fewer meet the fruit recommendations. This information alone is good reason to grow your own vegetables and fruits but it is not the only reason.

Gardening is great exercise, burning anywhere from 250 to 400 calories per hour depending on your intensity while doing your garden chores. A daily visit to your garden can be part of your exercise program and eating the bounty from your garden can be part of your healthy eating plan. Instead of being a couch potato, grow a potato and a tomato and burn some calories.

Gardening relieves stress and provides mental relaxation while also satisfying the human instinct to



nurture. With the rewards of fruits, vegetables and flowers, gardening provides tremendous enjoyment and brings beauty to you and the world.

Involving children in gardening is a great way to spend time with them as well as teach them invaluable lessons of life. The knowledge of where plants come from, how fruits and vegetables grow and the requirements for the plants to live and survive is something children will enjoy learning. It teaches them responsibility and respect for living things and nature. Working in the dirt and getting their hands dirty

while producing vegetables and fruits is a lesson that will stay with them for a lifetime.

No matter what kind of space you have, you can grow a vegetable garden. An area as small as 25 square feet will feed a family. You can grow a garden even if you live in a condo or an apartment by using containers on your patio or deck. Containers can be half barrels, bushel baskets, five-gallon tubs, window boxes and other creative containers. Creative gardeners grow vegetables, fruits and herbs along flower beds and mixed in with ornamentals. For those with disabilities, raised beds help make gardening possible. Any type of garden space will grow a productive vegetable garden when you plan and use good cultural practices.



HOME VEGETABLE GARDENING INFORMATION

www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/pdf/ag-o6.pdf

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